



## **CORPORATION BOARD Finance & General Purposes Committee**

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 28 September 2023 at 6pm

### **Present**

Nick Handy (Chair).  
Alan Bark.  
Jacqui Canton, Principal.  
Mackenzie Nordal

### **In attendance**

Jo Milsom, Deputy Principal.  
Olivier Cognard, Vice Principal of Funding, Planning & Systems Improvement.  
Mark Lay, Finance Director.  
Penny Challans, Head of Finance.  
Kelly Haddrell, Head of HR.  
Michael Chiyasa, Head of Estates and Capital Development.  
Howard Stamp, Clerk and Governance Advisor (minutes).

Governor questions are represented with bullet points, and management responses are italicized.

## **1. Opening Comments**

### **1.1 Apologies and matters to be raised under AOB.**

The Committee noted the apologies from Edward Collett, Staff Governor, and Yvonne Mortimer, Health & Safety Manager. The meeting was quorate.

There were no items raised under AOB.

### **1.2 Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were raised.

## **2 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2023**

The Committee approved the minutes for signature.

## **3 Matters Arising, Written Resolutions & Action Points**

There were no matters arising or written resolutions relating to this meeting. There were two actions points with the clerk, one of which had been completed and the other is ongoing for the December Board meeting.

The Committee noted the report.

## **4 Reports**

### **4.1 Annual Committee report to the Board.**

The Chair outlined the report to the committee as a statutory report and outlines the work of the committee for reflection.

There were no comments raised and the committee approved the report.

### **4.2 HR report**

The Head of HR presented the report and outlined key points to the committee, highlighting that the purpose of the report was to review the KPIs within the people strategy, with annual data from previous year now available and to provide an update to the committee for the operational plan for the year two of the strategy. Key KPI measures were highlighted to the committee such as staff feeling valued from the staff survey.

- It is difficult to define what feeling valued means; is this right to have as a KPI? *We feel it is right and we have a measure against the staff survey, however we could look again at how the information from this survey question is used.*
- Have the governors or this committee seen the questions or the outcomes of the staff survey? *The outcome has not yet been shared but they could come to the next F&GP now we have the data set and will have received the comparator data from other colleges.*
- There are staff leaving noted to cultural issues; this again is hard to measure. Others have resigned for salary; is this due to a better offer? *This only related to four staff, and they are varying reasons so there does not seem to be a trend here to investigate further.*
- Are the exit interviews carried out face to face or online? *We offer both. The questionnaire is sent to all, and we offer face to face meetings if requested.*
- On the topic of progression, is this a measure of upwards progression such as promotion or are there staff that progress to different roles? *This is a measure of all staff moving within the organisation for many different reasons not always promotion.*
- Do you differentiate between junior and senior staff? *We have not done so but we could break down the data further if felt it was helpful.*
- What is the change in flexible applications? *This is for those who may want to make a change to their working hours or days and the update will allow two requests a year as a national policy. We do not expect too much to come from this as we have a good record of supporting flexibility where we can.*

The Head for HR also outlined the first year of the operational plan and next steps into year two of the plan. There were no further questions raised on the operational plan.

The Committee noted the report.

### **4.3 Public Capital projects and estates report**

The Head of Estates and Capital Development presented the report and highlighted key areas to the committee of areas of improvement that have taken place over the summer as part of the planned schedule of works and future works upcoming including moving the English and Maths Hub at Witney.

- It speaks of an English and Maths Hub; can I ask what will happen in this hub? *We have a space where English and maths staff can work, and students can get support. We have one at Abingdon in a prominent location and it works well, we would like to replicate this at Witney as the current hub is less accessible than we would like. The new location is also street facing so could help raise the profile of English and Maths, including promotion of possible adult courses.*

It was highlighted to the committee that information has been in the public domain recently about RAAC. We have carried out surveys to identify if we have RAAC on our campuses. Abingdon is to be carried out next week and there is confidence RAAC is not present due to construction and refurbishment timeframes. However, the survey at Witney has identified a small area of potential RAAC in one building. This area has been closed until further investigation work is completed.

- Is the closed space causing us any challenges? *It is only impacting one teaching space and we have been able to relocate any classes taking place here. It has not required any teaching to be closed.*
- On the Electric Vehicles (EV) there is a saving figure; is this a CO2 saving we can claim as a college? *No this is technically personal savings by the individual EV drivers and not a college saving.*

- Are we doing any overall work to measure our CO2 emissions? *Yes, we are required to carry out this work and is published on our website but unfortunately the EV chargers do not add to this. We have investigated electric minibuses, but they are not currently available in the size we need.*

The Committee noted the report.

#### **4.4 Health & Safety report**

The Finance Director presented the report highlighting keys areas to the committee. It was outlined there had been nothing significant raised through RIDDOR for concern and numbers remain consistently low. Numbers for other KPIs were on similar levels with previous years.

It was highlighted to the committee that work was being undertaken to improve systems.

- The developments of EBS, will this help to consolidate systems? *Yes, we hope to be able to do some developments in house to what is our main student systems, and it would be preferred to use this more widely with in house development.*

*It was highlighted that the college is beginning to purchase light minibuses where replacement is needed.*

- What is a light minibus? *They are smaller vehicles that still have the same capacity but do not require the standard D1 minibus licence which will give us more flexibility of staff able to drive the buses.*

The Committee noted the report.

#### **4.5 Marketing report**

The Principal outlined the Marketing report to the committee, highlighting the work of the marketing team being carried out in line with the marketing strategy. The strong recruitment in 16-19 and the refresh on the website that has now been launched were both outlined

- On the website, were the images of individuals from the college? *No, not on the front. We have many college images throughout but not front and centre, many of our students do not feel being comfortable being on the front pages but we felt it was important to have a person to showcase our brand being individual focused.*
- What has driven the increase on the 16-19 recruitment? *There is a piece of detailed work that is being conducted by the data team to be presented at the Board meeting.*
- Where are the priorities for the marketing team set? *The long-term strategy? A number of them come from the college strategic plan and then more operationally they will be focused by the recruitment plan and admissions progress to help target promotional work using data.*

The committee noted the report.

[The committee took a short break]

## **5. Finance Matters**

### **5.1 Draft management accounts for previous financial year**

The Head of Finance presented the report and outlined the draft management accounts, highlighting the main points that have been through audit processes of which had finished this week.

It was outlined the college had exceeded KPIs and retained their financial health grade of 'Good' and the college had met all bank covenants with health reserves.

- On the balance sheet, there looks to be small error? *This is correct, the small typing error can be corrected.*
- On the cash flow, the income for the high needs paid from local authorities is this taken into account here? *Yes, OCC have moved to a more consistent model of paying us each term, this has changed and is better for College cashflow.*
- On payroll costs, are we able to carry out any work looking at our payroll against other colleges? *No specific work, however, we understand why ours is higher, many colleges outsource a number of items such as cleaning or catering and we have this in house, unfortunately other colleges do not easily share this information to benchmark against.*
- Do we carry out post investment appraisals? *We do not currently, we have carried out some similar work for the LEP on this but not on own internal work.*
- We are investing some of our reserves, how is this working? *We are reviewing this each week and placing funds on deposit, this is in line with our treasury management policy.*

*The committee recommended the draft budget to the Board.*

## **5.2 Enrolment Update**

The vice principal presented the report to the committee, highlighting recruitment of the main areas of student recruitment. The main focus on the 16-19 recruitment of which is significantly above previous years and in line with projections and around the 2000 headcount currently, this will continue to change over these early weeks of the academic year.

- Are other colleges seeing the same change? *It sounds like most colleges are having increases, however from the information we have, we are seeing significantly more than other colleges.*
- What is the trigger point for in year payment? *100 students so we will be meeting this.*
- With the Witney campus are students more likely to stay in Witney rather than come to Abingdon? *Yes, there is an element of this, access to transport in this area is a challenge. We have seen a greater increase at Abingdon.*
- Are there capacity restraints? *At the moment we are not seeing this, we have seen good forecast data, and this has allowed us to forward plan for these increases and adjust timetables accordingly. We are busy but we do have space and we are using the room utilisation reports to ensure we are keeping up with demand.*
- How confident are we on the numbers and the longevity of our HE provision? *Our numbers remain strong as there are wider number such as in the SAEB and apprenticeship numbers depending on funding. However, we agree we will continue to monitor HE numbers.*

There is further information being gathered to be presented when a more informed picture is available at the Board meeting in October.

The Committee noted the report.

## **5.3 Update on current year budget**

The Finance Director presented the paper highlighting the budget that was agreed in the July Board meeting, with only one month of the new academic year having taken place. However, key changes had taken place with additional funding received from the ESFA and advice from the AoC for colleges to support a 6.5% pay increase from this funding.

The committee were reminded that there was previously a 3% increase agreed with an additional 1% based on achievement of enrolment targets, however this has now been revised in the paper and the updated budget to account for the proposed 6.5% pay increase.

The paper also outlined the forecast additional in year funding from the high 16-19 recruitment and explained that this additional funding is included within the updated budget.

- Reflecting back on the paper, are we saying it is 3% plus 3.5% or are we saying it is a flat 6.5%? The question being are we saying there is still an element retained based on enrolments? *We are proposing it is a flat 6.5%*
- How does the T level clawback work? T Level clawback is calculated based on the number of T Level planned against actual enrolments with a reducing tolerance year on year. There will be a small claw back for T Level which will be counter balanced by a much larger in year growth for the 16 to 19 funding.
- We are expecting a £80,000 clawback? *We were, but there is now a net growth figure of £300,000 included within the budget and this is made up of the increase for 16-19 base students offset by clawback of under-recruited T level students. The MIS team have a calculator to help inform this figure.*
- There is also potential for the in year 16-19 payment to be greater if numbers are higher? *Yes, once we get a student number picture, we can make these calculations.*
- What impact would that have on EBITDA? *That would push it back into a positive position.*

The Committee noted the update and recommended for pay award to be made to Board.

#### **5.4 Major capital projects and grants update**

The Finance Director presented the paper that outlined the various grants received in the last year. Highlighting the LSIF grant for £500,000, it was explained that the outcome of our bid application has not yet been confirmed. However we are planning how we would use these funds, because if our bid were approved we would have to start work on the project immediately.

The paper summarised the various funding streams possible for the works outlined in the estates and capital projects plan.

- Will investment still be needed for Media T levels and the curriculum? *This was delayed for a year and will be starting this September with a lower level of investment needed for the revised curriculum design.*

The Committee noted the report.

## **6. Policies**

### **6.1 Tuition Fee Policy**

The Finance Director presented the policy highlighting the main change a fee for HNC courses. All other fees have remained the same as last year.

There is a small addition to make to the policy to change the duration over which fees can be collected to 8 months.

One small typing error was identified on table 3 and it was agreed for this to be amended.

The committee agreed the amendments and recommended the policy to Board, subject to these changes..

## 6.2 Dignity at Work Policy

The Head of HR presented the policy, highlighting the policy had been shortened to make the policy more specific, but with more added to the complaints element.

The committee approved the policy.

## 6.3 Staff Grievance Policy

The Head of HR presented the policy, highlighting more detail had been added for the formal and informal procedures and that the process to be followed when grievances and disciplinarys occur at the same time had been clarified.

- Is there a panel convened to consider appeals? *This is investigated by the college leadership team and shared with SMT. Appeals would then be made to the Principal.*
- Are senior post holders included here? *No, this is a separate policy approved at NRG.*

The committee approved the policy.

## 6.4 Staff Wellbeing Policy

The Head of HR presented the policy, highlighting a simplified policy, with a manager and an employee section to make responsibilities clearer.

The committee approved the policy.

## 7. General purposes

### 7.1 Freedom of information requests update

The Clerk presented the report outlining the four freedom of information requests. These had all been responded to within the timeframe, which is an improvement on previous responses in the absence of the Clerk.

- When we receive these requests do we expect some of them? *Some are expected where companies are seeking information that may lead to business; these are reasonably standard and expected.*

The Committee noted the report.

### 7.2 Committee self-assessment

The Chair outlined the requirement for a committee self-assessment and asked for any verbal feedback in the meeting.

Governors discussed the committee and agreed there was good round table discussion; governors felt they all had an opportunity to contribute at meetings.

The Clerk advised all committee members would shortly receive a questionnaire to reflect on previous year.

## 8. Any Other Business

There were no items raised for AOB.

## 9. Future Business

The next F&GP Committee meeting was scheduled for Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023 at 6pm.

The meeting closed at 7:55pm.

Approved for signature: ..... November 23rd 2023  
N Handy  
23/01/2024 16:53:03

Signature ..... *Nick Handy* .....  
23/01/2024

Date .....



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